

REASONS

Why all Good

CHRISTIANS

Should observe the

Holy Fast of Lent

3- Extracted out of my Lord of EL No Pictorial Feb.

I *THE Sacred Penitential Time of Lent is at hand, what shall I do? Shall I take notice of it, or no? If I take no notice of it, Mr. Hildemans will stigmatize me as a Black and Cruel Wretch, and I do take notice of it, Mr. Cox will condemn me as a Papist in *Atque* 000 Times 10 Manners! Unhappy Age in which we live! Dissolve *Dura vita carum* and *hominum* *facies*! *Quid hoc* *breve* *et* *inutile* *est* *hominum* *vitae* *placet* *Alia*. If I seek to please Men, or fear to offend them, I am no longer an honourable Servant of Jesus Christ, but a base Slave of the vile World. If I christianly observe this Sacred Time, my own Conscience, I am sure, will applaud me, whatsoever my Neighbour may say or think of me. And a good Conscience, even when it dictates Fasting and Abstinence, is a continual Feast. But will not the Holy Gospel say, I am superstitious? God forbid! I know they are the words of our Blessed Lord himself *Matth. 23. 16*. *Nathaniel which goes into the mouth, doth not defile him; but that which comes out of the mouth, that defileth him.* And our kind our great Master spoken those words, when it was objected to him by the Disciples of St. John, that they and the Pharisees fasted often; but his Disciples fasted not; the Objection would not so easily have been answered; But consulting the Sacred Text, I find he is so far from disparaging the holy Duty of Fasting, by saying, *Nathaniel which goes into the mouth, doth not defile him*, as he really commends it, as a Duty too sublime, for such Novices in Religion as his Apostles is yet weak; but the time would come when they should rise to wit, after he shall have been taken away from them.*

them, and shall have strengthen'd them for so hard and necessary a Duty, by a plentiful effusion of the Holy-Ghost upon them. The new Wine of rigorous Abstinence and Fasting was too strong for the frail Borders of our Lord's Disciples, for their Confirmation from the Holy-Ghost upon the day of Pentecost. But can then that which goes into my mouth defile me? Yes, when I eat or drink in contempt of the equitable and just command of my lawful Superiour, Ecclesiastical or Civil. Though strictly speaking, it is not the Meat then which defiles me, but my disobedience to my Superiour.

Not to engage in long Disputes: For these Reasons methinks every good Christian ought Religiously to observe the Holy Fast of Lent.

Because Fasting in itself has ever been look'd upon by all Christians as a Christian Duty, and is not only highly commended by all the ancient Fathers of the most Primitive Times, Obus affords the Holy Scripture is full, as having a singular Power to drive out the Devil: *This Devil goes not out but by Prayer and Fasting.* To obtain the Holy Ghost for our selves or others: The Holy Apostles used and pray'd, that the Holy Ghost might descend upon those on whom they conferred Holy Orders. To avert God's anger from a particular Person, City, or Country. Thus *Abas* and the *Nazarens* supplic'd the wrath of the Almighty: *Althouph* shew'd Circumference, to dispose the-Mind for Prayer; to encrease all Vertues in us in this Life, and our Crown of Glory in the other. If we fast in a due manner, we have our Blessed Saviour's word for it, that we shall have Reward in Heaven. If I fast to afflict and humble my self before God Almighty for my Sins, my Fasting is an Act of Repentance. If I cast myself that I may have more to give to those that are in need, my Fasting is an act of Charity. If I fast, the better to dispose my self for Prayer, 'tis an act of Religious Devotion. If I fast, judging my self not worthy of any Delicacies, nor of my fill of even the coarsest Fare, 'tis an act of Humility, and disposes my Soul moreover as little to affect fine Clothes or commodious Lodgings, as I do good Visuale, and consequently moderates my desire of Money and Riches, which are not desirable by corrupt Nature, but for these or such-like uses. If I fast, that I may be better able to pay my Father, or provide my Children's Portions, 'tis an act of Justice, and Christian Fraternal Piety. If to moderate my inordinate Appetite of Meat and Drink, 'tis an act of Temperance, and strangely disposes to Temperance in the whole course of my life, when by experience I find my self so chearful and contented, or rather more, upon a fasting day, than when I indulge to excess in eating and drinking. In fine, 'tis hard to name a Vertue which fasting does not strangely help to procure, maintain, and encrease. As for the four Cardinal Vertues, 'tis the formal exercise of the highest degree of Temperance, not so Fortitude less seen in abstaining from what pleases us, than in sustaining what afflicts us. It makes Justice easy, and is the Moderator of wild and sober Thoughts. It moderates our Passions, clarifies our Understandings, and makes us more fit for Contemplation of Natural or Supernatural Verities. *O Angelical Abstinence!*

Me.

*And thinks I could be intemperate in my Praise;
And fasts thee with sugar Words, and Roundels.* B.O.

2. *Fasting* then being of so singular use in a Christian life, and Experience telling us, That those who fast only, when they please, are pleased to fast very seldom, or not at all; our Spiritual Prelates, who watch for our Souls good, can do no less than oblige us by a Law to fast some times, nor we do no less than Religiously observe their equitable Commands.

3. I have all reason to think, the Holy Fast of Lent was first appointed by the Holy Apostles themselves, and consequently ought to be Religiously observed by all good Christians. Now that the Holy Fast of Lent was appointed by the Apostles, methinks may be proved thus: Two hundred years ago *England, France, Spain, Germany, Italy,* and all the Eastern Churches, universally *fasted* Lent, as 'tis evident by the Records and Annals of our own, and those other Christian Countries. There are the Apostles taught Lent to their first Converts, both in the Eastern and Western World where they preached: For it cannot be imagined, that so many several Countries, Kings and Subjects, Priests and People, could by chance fall upon the yearly practice of abstaining from Flesh 40 days before *Easter*. Therefore they must either all at first be taught so by their first Masters of Christianity, which is the Conclusion intended to be proved; or some universal Supreme Authority, Ecclesiastical or Civil, must have commanded them to do: or some Preachers first in one Country, and then in another, must so have persuaded them to do in some Age since. But our Annals of our own, or other Christian Countries, make any mention of any such Preachers, or any such Ordination made by any General Council, Pope, Prince, or Emperour: Nor yet have we, or any other Christian Countries, wanted Ecclesiastical Historiographers, who in their Memorials have taken notice of far lesser matters than such an Innovation as this must needs have been, had the Apostles taught the World no such observance. And the truth is, 'tis pure Ignorance, in Ecclesiastical History, and the Works of the Primitive Fathers, that makes so many waver in the Belief of the Apostolical Institution of *Lent*; in which, if they were well conversant, they could not possibly doubt of it.

Further: Not only two hundred years ago, but twelve hundred years ago, *Lent* was universally observed in the whole Christian World, both in the Eastern and Western Church, as is manifest out of the pious Works of the prime Pillars and Pastors of Christ's Church, in the fourth and fifth Century of Christianity. Nor do the opposers of *Lent* deny so much, and therefore appeal to the first 300 years after our Saviour; for which time, and which only, they pretend the Christian Worship was untainted, and not infected with the superstitious Observation of *Lent*. Let us suppose then, that for the first 300 years of Christianity, the Church of Christ is

England, Italy, Greece, and other Countries, observed no such thing as *Lent-Fast*; and consider by what means possible, the fourth Age could not only bring it in all over the Christian World, but bring it in so secretly or covertly, that the prime Doctors of the fifth Age should not be able to discern, that this new Burden was superadded to Christianity by their immediate Progenitors, but should be verily persuaded, that such an Observation had immemorably from Generation to Generation descended to them from the first Planters of Christianity, the Apostles. And yet it is evident, that the fifth Age did not only keep *Lent*, but also kept it as an Apostolical Institute, 1605, and the prime Christian Doctors of that Age have left it upon Record, in their deservedly admired Works, that they kept this *Holy Fast* as an observance taught them by Tradition from the Apostles. Hear the own words of *St. Hieron*, in his Epistle to *Marcella*: *It's fast one Lent* (Quadragesima) *within the compass of a whole year, according to the Traditions of the Apostles, in a Season fit for us. The Monasticks keep three Lents in the year, as I three Seasons had suffered.* Now if for the first 300 years there had been no such observance by Christians at *Rome*, but if in the fourth Century some Bishop of *Rome*, or some Provincial or General Council, or Christian Emperour, had first introduced it, could a Learned Priest of *Rome* of the fifth Age, and one well versed in all Ecclesiastical matters, as *St. Hieron* was, ere so grossly, as to mistake to be a new Institution for an Apostolical Tradition, that is, for an observance taught the City of *Rome*, from Father to Son, from the Apostles. For the *Greek Church*, hear the Testimony of *Theophilus* Patriarch of *Alexandria*, (to the Patriarchs of which See, it was entrusted by the first General Council, That they should yearly signify before hand, to the rest of the Churches, as well as their own, the true time of *Easter*.) In his first Paschal Epistle, he writes thus: *Let us cure the wounds of Peter, &c. And so may we enter the Fast at hand, beginning Lent the 30th day of the month Mecher, (as it were our February, the Egyptians reckoning 30 days in every month.) The week of the Salutary Fast is the fifth day of the month Pharmuth (or April), and ending the Fast according to the Evangelical Traditions on the evening of the Saturday, being the tenth of Pharmuth; and on the next Lord's day, the 11th of the same month, let us celebrate the Feast.* The like he lays in his second Paschal Epistle, and again he says according to the Evangelical Traditions, I add the Testimony of *S. Cyril*, Patriarch of the same *Alexandria*, in the next Age, in his 20th Homily, *De Festis Paschalis*: *Such as keep a pure Fast, beginning the Holy Lent from such a day, ending also the Fast on the 7th day of Pharmuth, late in the Evening, according to the Traditions Apostolical.* The same *S. Cyril*, in nineteen other of his Homilies, cited by *B. Gunning*, in his *Lent-Fast* proved to be Apostolical, *De Festis Paschalis*, (preached in so many several years) refers the same Fasts of *Lent* to Tradition, Appointment, or Instruction Evangelical. The Law of observing in *Lent*, was at first in the Church, says the above-cited *Theophilus Alexandrinus*. Now can it be imagined, that these two Learned Patriarchs, (to whom by the whole Christian Church was committed the care of signifying the due

time of *Lent* and *Easter*) and the Holy Fast of *Lent* been so lately brought in by some University Ecclesiastical or Civil Authority, to the disregard of the ancient Customs and Laws of the World also, that they had been so taught to end *Lent* from Generation to Generation from the Apostles? Note also, wheresoever *Lent* is observed, the Observers of it profess from Generation to Generation to have observed it from the first planting of Christianity amongst them; nor does any of their Annual Ecclesiastical or Civil make any mention of a later Institution of it, and refer it to the Holy Apostles had appointed *Lent* by Oral Teaching, without other Arguments could we have had for its Apostolical Institution.

But if a yearly Religious Observation of the Holy Fast of *Lent* be of such singular benefit and Spiritual advantage to all Christians; and if also the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ did recommend such an Observation to the several Countries by them converted to the Christian Faith, how comes it to pass that none of all their Writings which have come to our hands, make express mention of it? Hear Bishop Guining, p. 138. *Ritual Observances being visible, and as it were legible to the eyes of all Churches and their practices, need not to be set down in their written Rules. Of those which are things of the heart, not necessarily so evidently, but that they need the interpretation of such the Churches practice.* And indeed, whoever will impartially consider the nature of the Books of the New Testament, will be so far from wondering, that all the Rituals of Christianity are not expressly declared in them, that he will rather wonder there is so much in them of the exterior Rites of Christian Religion as there is. Had any of the sacred Christian Pen-men written a Book, on purpose to declare the whole manner of Christian Worship, like *Joseph his Bishop of Lombez*, we might reasonably have expected an account, what days Christians were to set apart for Fasting or Religious Feasting, what Garments they were to use in time of Divine Worship, &c. But they only, as is manifest, writing Books for other intents and purposes, by way of History, for example, or moral Exhortations, and making mention only by the by of some of our Christian Rites, as they occurred; nothing can be more unreasonable than to expect in their said Writings an express clear mention of every Christian Ceremonial Observance. And why St. Paul, or other of the Apostles, should make mention of *Lent* in the Epistles they wrote to persons already instructed in the Christian Faith, I understand not; unless perchance the persons they wrote unto had been deficient in observing it.

Further: What though the Holy Apostles did not first institute the *Lent Fast*, but it grew by little and little from the pious observation of some particular Christians into an universal Practice, ought not the universal Practice of the whole Christian Church, both Eastern and Western, of above twelve hundred years continuance, to have more weight with us, than the Non conformity of a few Modern Christians, sprung up in the night of this last Age? Besides, we are commanded by our Civil and Ecclesiastical Superiours assembled in Parliament, to fast *Lent* upon a Religious account, by an Act never yet repealed, which the Statute, 2 & 3 of Ed. 6.

14. It is as much as shew the Kings Subjects, that of late time, our Nation in Town, hath broken out into such Abstinence, which has bene used in this Nation upon the Friday and Saturday, the Fast-days, and other days, commonly called Vigils, and in the time commonly called Lent, and other accustomed Times, the Kings Majesty considering that due and godly Abstinence is a means to Purge, and so to cleanse our Bodies to their Soul and Spirits, and considering also that Esther, the Lord Obediah and Daniel, with the assistance of the Lords Temporal and Spiritual, saw That no person or persons, of what Estate, Degree, or Condition he or they are, shall at any time after the First day of May, 1593, willingly or unwillingly eat any manner of Flesh upon any Friday or Saturday, in the Ember days, or on any day in the time commonly called Lent.

Moreover it seeme not to be observed upon a Religious account, in the name of God what does it in the Liturgy, Calendars, more than Fasts and Workes? Reflect also with B. *dwelling* upon the Prayer for the fast Sunday in Lent. O Lord, who for our sakes didst fast forty days and forty nights, give us Grace to use such Abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, it may overcome thereby. Godly mortification in Righteousness, and true Holiness. How unworthy it would be to make that Holy Prayer to hear such a sense as this, O Lord, who for our sakes didst fast forty Days and forty nights, give us Grace to use such Abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, it may overcome thereby. Godly mortification in Righteousness, and true Holiness. How unworthy it would be to make that Holy Prayer to hear such a sense as this, O Lord, who for our sakes didst fast forty Days and forty nights, give us Grace to use such Abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, it may overcome thereby. Godly mortification in Righteousness, and true Holiness.

To conclude, we offend the same all holy and all just God, by the same sins our fore-fathers Offended him, why should we therefore to appease his anger by the same familiarizations of Eating and Drunkenness as they did? we have Bodies no less subject to temptation than theirs, why not keep them in subjection by the same chastizements as they have done? We need the same Holy Ghost our fore-fathers did, why should we expect to draw him down upon us but by fasting and prayer, as they did? Not can our living in a Northerly Country excuse us, our Ancestors who lived under the same climate fasted often and rigorously. If we expect to go to the same Heaven with them, we must expect to go by the same rough path of Christian Temperance as they went. Besides the abounding of all iniquity amongst us, Covetousness, Drunkenness, Gluttony, Lasciviousness, Pride, Malice, Shedding of Innocent blood, Profaneness, Heresy, Blasphemy, Infidelity, Atheism, cry aloud to Gods Vengeance against us, and call every devout Christian to Fasting, Weeping and Mourning, to prevent those temporal Judgments we may justly fear, and remove those spiritual plagues of Divisions, Ignorance and Error, which we too sensibly feel. *Isaiah* says, saies the Holy Prophet *Isay*, Chap. 22, V. 12, 13, 14. Did the Lord God of Hosts call to Weeping and to Mourning, and to Baldness; and to grinding with Sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, singing, Quen and killing Sheep, eating Flesh and drinking Wine: let us eat and drink for to morrow we shall die. And that is revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you say, saith the Lord God of Hosts. The eating of Flesh and drinking Wine, when God Almighty calls to fasting, weeping, and mourning, is an iniquity, saies the

the Holy Prophet, which shall never be forgotten. And when does Almighty God call to fasting, fasting, and fasting? He do not call them when our own and others sinners, when the sinners of the whole Christian World in all Ages are invited to it, when our souls are in danger, when our souls good, positively command it?

Whom all that has been said cannot persuade to a Religious observation of the Penitential time of *Lent*, I have one reasonable request to them, that they would but for one year fast, as many days out of Private Devotion, as they do who fast at set times and days commanded by an extralegal Authority; and I persuade my self, they would find so great spiritual benefit thereby, that they would clearly see, fasting being good in it self, its being commanded by our Superiours can never make it Superstition. I deny not but the change of the Primitive Christian way of fasting into a meer Abstinence from flesh, by Set Fathers, fasting from one sort of meat and feasting upon others, making up what they wanted in meat by Wine and strong drink, as meat and better wine, gave us too great occasion to many simple well meaning people, to look upon all fasting as a meer Superstition: It being hard to conceive that ever the Apostles could appoint such a manner of fasting, as is too too commonly practised by Professors to follow Apostolical Institutions in their Set fasts. For what say *Non-Conformists*, if we must upon the Authority of the Primitive Fathers fast *Lent*, why then ought we not to follow the manner of fasting, practised by the same Fathers? Have the Holy Fathers a sacred Authority when they reprehend the *Non-fasting* of *Non-Comformists*, but none at all when they reprehend the mock manner of fasting of those of the Church of *England* or the Church of *Rome*? As for answer to this objection, we all acknowledge our fault, and are resolved seriously to endeavour amendment, and according to our corporal and spiritual strength, Piously to emulate the Primitive Christians fasting: And would you joyn with us in so holy an exercise, we hope what our own simple knowledg is not able to prevall with our sensual Nature to do, your good example would shame us into the effectual performance of, at least in some good measure. And now I hope your objection is answered, and a happy solution this indeed, God grant it. Let us lay aside, this sacred Penitential time, all other disputes, and let this be our great Controversie, who shall spend most of our time in devout prayers, and diligent reading or hearing Gods word; and most of our worldly wealth in charitable Alms upon our indigent neighbour, and least upon our selves in meat and drink: Let none revile or injure his brother, but let our great quarrel be against our selves, Judging and Punishing our selves for our sins by fasting and Abstinence in this world, that we may not be Judged and punished for them by Almighty God by Hell-fire in the other. By such disputes as these we shall sooner come to an amicable union amongst our selves, and to the happy favour of our common Lord and God, than by all our uncharitable unchristian Brawls and Contests.

Quod

*Quod universis fidei...
...et non solum...
...et non solum...
...et non solum...*

Whom all that has been said cannot persuade to a Religious observation
of the Protestant form of Law. I have one reasonable request to them
that they would but for one year lay, as many days out of Private Devotion
as they do who last at least ten days commanded by an external
Authority; and I persuade my self, they would find to great spiritual
benefit thereby, that they would clearly see, that being good in itself,
its being commanded by our Superior can never make it such. I deny
not but the change of the Primitive Christian way of living into a more
abstinent from flesh, by self-denial, taking from one sort of meat
and leaving upon other, making up what they wanted in heat by Wine
and strong drink, or meat and drink more, gave but too great occasion
to many simple well-meaning people, to look upon all fasting as a merit
for salvation: it being hard to conceive that ever the Apostles could appoint
such a manner of fasting, as is too commonly practised by Protestants
to follow Apostolical institutions in their sects. For what say you
Conformity, if we must upon the Authority of the Primitive Fathers fast
Law, why then ought we not to follow the manner of fasting, prescribed
by the same Fathers? Have the Holy Fathers a secret Authority when they
say, that we must fast, but not how? And how is it, that the Church of Rome
reproaches the mock-manner of fasting of those of the Church of England, or
the Church of Rome? As for answer to this objection, we all acknowledge
our fault, and are resolved seriously to endeavour amendment, and according
to our corporal and spiritual riches, properly to emulate the Primitive Christians
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hearing Gods word, and most of our worldly wealth in charitable Aims upon
our indigent neighbour, and least upon our selves in meat and drink: let none
revile or injure his brother, but let our great desire be, to imitate our Saviour
judging and punishing our selves for our line by fasting, and Abstinence in
this regard, that we may not be judged and punished for them by Almighty
God by Hell-fire in the other. By such disputes as these we shall sooner come
to an amicable union amongst our selves, and to the happy favour of our
common Lord and God, than by all our incharitable unchristian Brawls and
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